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SUGGESTIONS FOR A FRANCO-AMERICAN ALLIANCE
1782[?].¹

TRANSLATED BY ALBERT J. EDMUNDS.

“MY LORDS THE MINISTERS OF STATE:

“A Memorial to make the whole power and genius of the French nation and the United States of North America perfectly understood, to destroy the presumption of the English, and to settle a Peace advantageous to these three nations.

“MY LORDS:

“You have in several parts of France a very great number of merchant vessels, idle and useless for commerce in time of war, but quite large and very useful to make excellent privateers of: they only need to be bored for all the guns they can carry, and sheathed so as to resist balls, like frigates. True, the sheathing will make them rather heavier, but they won't be any the worse sailers, because men won't load them with quite so much ballast.

“But to come to my point, it is very seasonable, my Lords, with all respect to your judgment, to put into use the three following devices.

“Firstly, in time of war, abandon marine commerce, let every one fly to agriculture, manufactures, and trade by land, and to arms by land and sea.

“Secondly, have all the said well-armed vessels bored, sheathed, armed and commissioned as soon as possible in every place where you shall deem them most available for the effectual work of destroying the English marine, or at least of preventing it from making any descent upon the possessions of the United States of America or of France.

¹ From the Franklin Papers, in the library of the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

Observation: in time of war with the English by sea, France and the United States will gain far more by attack and vigorous defence than by amusing themselves with commerce by sea, thus giving the enemy a chance to pillage and rob thereon.

“Now, thirdly: give a general invitation to all the traders of neutral nations to bring into every port of France and the United States all provisions, munitions of war, and other goods such as they please to sell there; and to take out of port such as they find there to buy. ‘When we all abandon marine commerce, and fly to agriculture, to manufactures and to arms, all nations will be our friends and protégés; they will come from all sides to buy and sell whatever we wish, and the English won’t be able to take anything on sea, because we shall have nothing on it but well-armed vessels; nor yet on land, because our coasts and those of our allies will be quite well defended by our marine and our land troops.’

“Observe, my Lords, if you please that (1) by the great number of vessels large and small which you will be able to put to sea well-armed, you can invade and seize upon any possessions of the English and destroy their marine, or at least preserve all the possessions of France and the United States; (2) France and her allies (the United States) ought never to prevent any neutral nation from importing any kind of goods, provisions or munitions of war into England, so that by force of money and the fact that it pays them best, we shall have all the said neutral nations for friends. (3) All marines are supported by the various productions of the earth. France and the United States are (by the goodness, the extent, and the fertility of their soils and climates) far richer than England in all these kinds of productions, and in men, they can form a marine much more powerful and formidable, and maintain them much longer than England. Consequently, sooner or later England will be forced to accept the terms dictated by the equity, generosity and beneficence of France and the United States; provided they neglect nothing while despising the smallness of their

enemies, and that they make, as they should, by land and sea, every effort with all possible promptitude, firmness and perseverance.

“As soon as the English see you adopt their system, it is certain, my Lords, that they will retire into themselves and give up their chimerical empire of the sea; their contempt will be changed into respect, their presumption into wisdom, and their implacable hate into a friendship perfect and eternal. This is what I desire with all my heart.

“[?]”¹

In the same hand and over the same mysterious signature is a still longer document, entitled “Fundamental Articles of a project for perpetual Peace, under the name of a free-masonic union, between all the sovereigns of Europe and their neighbours; or, Circular Letter, dedicated to all the true friends of all countries, all sovereigns, and of mankind at large, of whatever country, nation or religion they may be.”

¹ There appear to be two initials here, but they are obscured by flourishes.